

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 01249 041518Z

65

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01

ACDA-05 IO-11 SSM-03 SAB-01 /078 W

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R 041507Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6570

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 1249

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, SY, LE

SUBJECT: KHADDAM COMMENTS ON LEBANESE SCENE

1. HAD OPPORTUNITY DISCUSS LEBANESE SITUATION WITH
KHADDAM MARCH 4. FONMIN WAS GENERALLY OPTIMISTIC RE
PROSPECTS FOR CONTINUED PROGRESS TOWARDS STABILITY AND
ONLY HINTED AT HIS REPORTED STRONG IRRITATION OVER THE
SLOW PACE OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS.

2. ASKED WHAT ELEMENTS OF STABILITY AND/OR INSTABILITY
HE SAW IN THE PRESENT SITUATION, KHADDAM REPLIED THAT WHILE
HE COULD NOT RULE OUT FUTURE INSTABILITY IN LEBANON, SYRIA
WAS HELPING THE LEBANESE STATE RESUME ITS FUNCTION.
DAMASCUS WAS ENCOURAGED BY THE DEVELOPMENT OF ANTI-WAR
SENTIMENT IT SAW AMONG ALL LEBANESE FACTIONS. HE
REFUSED PREDICT HOW LONG IT MIGHT TAKE TO RECONSTITTUE
LEBANESE ARMY AND SECURITY FORCES INTO EFFECTIVE INSTRUMENTS,
SAYING MERELY THAT HE BELIEVED THIS WOULD BE SOONER THAN
ANYONE WAS CURRENTLY ESTIMATING.

3. HE WAS A BIT MORE TESTY ABOUT THE LEBANESE POLITICAL
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PAGE 02 DAMASC 01249 041518Z

SCENE, COMMENTING THAT AS REGARDS FORMATION OF A NEW CABINET

THE LEBANESE APPEARED TO BE IN NO HURRY. HE FOUND THE LEBANESE OBLIVIOUS TO THE ECONOMIC DESTRUCTION THEY HAD CAUSED THEIR COUNTRY. "IN GENERAL THE WORLD HAS BEEN MUCH MORE PREOCCUPIED WITH THE PROBLEM OF LEBANON THAN THE LEBANESE THEMSELVES. THEY DO NOT THINK ABOUT TOMORROW."

4. ASKED IF HE HAD ANY EVIDENCE OF ELEMENTS IN THE LEBANESE POLITICAL STRUCTURE WHICH WERE EXPLOITING THE CASE-FIRE IN ORDER SIMPLY TO REARM AND RESUME COMBAT, HE SAID HE DID NOT SENSE A DESIRE FOR WAR ON THE PART OF ANYONE. IF THE LEBANESE SHOWED THEMSELVES TO BE IN NO HURRY FOR PEACE IN TERMS OF REORGANIZING THEIR CABINET, IT SEEMED ON THE BASIS OF INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO DAMASCUS, THAT THEY CERTAINLY WERE IN NO HURRY FOR RENEWED WAR.

5. ASKED ABOUT THE BREAKAWAY FORCE OF LT. AL-KHATIB IN THE BEKAA VALLEY, KHADDAM SAID THERE WERE EXCELLENT PROSPECTS THAT THE "QUESTION" WOULD BE QUICKLY REGULARIZED.

6. TO OBSERVATION THAT TO RETURN TO THE CAIRO ACCORD SEEMED TO SOME OBSERVERS TO BE ASKING A GREAT DEAL OF THE PALESTINIANS, GIVEN THEIR CHANGED RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GOL SINCE 1969, KHADDAM SAID EMPHATICALLY, "THEY HAVE ACCEPTED IT; THEY WILL IMPLEMENT IT COMPLETELY AND IT WILL BE IN THEIR INTEREST."

7. ASKED WHY HE THOUGHT GALLAGHER AND DYKES HAD BEEN RELEASED, KHADDAM REPLIED THAT THE PFLP HAD BEEN UNDER GREAT PRESSURE TO DO SO. HE HAD HEARD THE STORY THAT A SMALL LEBANESE FACTION HAD DETAINED THEM ALL THESE MONTHS BUT COULD ASSURE ME THEY HAD BEEN UNDER PFLP CONTROL. HE SAID HE COULD NOT BE MORE PRECISE ABOUT PFLP THINKING ABOUT GALLAGHER/DYKES BECAUSE SYRIA HAD NO RELATIONS WITH THAT ORGANIZATION. MURPHY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL STABILITY, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 04 MAR 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: buchant0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976DAMASC01249
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760083-0606
From: DAMASCUS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760396/aaaadgqo.tel
Line Count: 96
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: buchant0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07 JUN 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <07 OCT 2004 by buchant0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: KHADDAM COMMENTS ON LEBANESE SCENE
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, SY, LE, (KHADDAM, ABD AL-HALIM)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006